

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 1913

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, IN

SUBJECT: TRAVELS IN MAHARASHTRA AND GOA

1. LABOR COUNSELOR BLOCK JUST RETURNED FROM VISITS TO BOMBAY, THE INDUSTRIAL CENTER OF POONA (MAHARASHTRA STATE), AND GOA WHERE HE MET WITH GOVERNMENT, MANAGEMENT AND LABOR LEADERS. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THEIR VIEWS ON SELECTED POLITICAL TOPICS OF THE DAY.

2. THE BUREAUCRATIC RAJ: SENIOR CENTER AND STATE LABOR OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE LABOR MINISTERS OF MAHARASHTRA AND GOA INDICATED THAT THEY ARE PLAYING A MUCH MORE ACTIVE ROLE SINCE THE EMERGENCY. THIS HAS BEEN TO THE DETRIMENT OF PRIVATE DECISION MAKING IN THE LABOR FIELD. MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS WHO HAVE AND CONTINUE TO PRAISE THE ABSENCE OF LABOR AGITATION AND THE NEW SENSE OF DISCIPLINE, WHICH THEY EXPLAIN IS BASED ON FEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME SEEM TO RECOGNIZE THAT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IS A TWO-EDGED INSTRUMENT. INDUSTRIALIST NAVAL TATA SAID THAT TWO ENTREPRENEURS WERE IMPRISONED FOR LAYING OFF EMPLOYEES. THE MAHARASHTRA LABOR MINISTER IS NOW FEUDING WITH THE IMPORT KIRLOSKAR OIL ENGINES COMPANY BECAUSE IT DIS-

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MISSED SOME WORKERS. KIRLOSKAR FEELS THAT IT IS BEING

THREATENED WITH RIGID ENFORCEMENT OF LABOR LEGISLATION. MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS SEE NEW LEGISLATION, PASSED BY THE LOWER HOUSE ON FEB. 5, REQUIRING THAT LAY-OFFS BE APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS ANOTHER INCURSION ON THEIR PREROGATIVES.

3. THE EMERGENCY: THREE DISTINCT OPINIONS EMERGE. GOVERNMENT AND CONGRESS PARTY LEADERS NEVER TIRE IN PRAISING THE BENEFITS AND NEW JUSTICE ACHIEVED AS A RESULT OF THE EMERGENCY. AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM, PERSONS SUCH AS DR. SHANTI PATEL, FORMER MAYOR OF BOMBAY WHO WAS RECENTLY EXPELLED FROM THE CONGRESS PARTY, DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCY AS THE BLACKEST OF POLICE STATES. BAGARAM TULPULE, A LABOR LEADER WHO UNTIL RECENTLY WAS GENERAL MANAGER OF THE DURGAPUR STEEL WORKS, SAID THAT 100,000 WERE NOW IN JAILS AND THAT HALF OF HIS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WERE DETAINED. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO NAME NAMES. STILL A THIRD VIEW IS THAT INDIA TODAY IS NO POLICE STATE. WHILE CIVIL LIBERTIES HAVE BEEN SWEEPED AWAY, THE NEW REGIME IS BEING ADMINISTERED IN A BENIGN WAY WITH DUE CONCERN FOR THE PERSONAL NEEDS OF THOSE DETAINED. LABOR HISTORIAN V.B. KARNIK, ONE GENERALLY SENSITIVE TO CIVIL LIBERTIES, SURPRISED US BY LAUNCHING INTO A DETAILED ATTACK ON THE J.P. MOVEMENT. HE CRITICIZED THE HYPOCRISY OF THOSE WHO HAD RALLIED AROUND J.P.

4. THE OPPOSITION: THOSE, SUCH AS SHANTI PATEL AND BAGARAM TULPULE, INDICATED THAT THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN RENDERED TOTALLY INEFFECTIVE. THEY PREDICTED NO RESTORATION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN INDIA AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE EMERGENCY REGARDLESS OF WHAT NAME WAS ASSIGNED THE SYSTEM.

5. SANJAY GANDHI: WHEN THE SUBJECT OF SANJAY WAS INITIATED BY THE INDIAN INTERLOCUTOR, THE OPINION WAS UNIFORMLY NEGATIVE. FOR EXAMPLE, SANJAY WAS DESCRIBED BY NAVAL TATA AS A "GANGSTER" WHO WAS RUDE AND RUTHLESS. (THE TATAS ARE CONSISTENT: JRD TATA USED THE SAME LANGUAGE IN TALKING WITH THE AMBASSADOR THIS WEEK.) HOWEVER, THEY FELT THAT HIS BRAND OF OPPORTUNISM WAS GENERALLY ANTI-COMMUNIST. MOSR RESPONDENTS BELIEVED THAT MRS. GANDHI WAS PUSHING THE CPI ASIDE AND THAT SANJAY WAS HER CHOSEN INSTRUMENT FOR THIS TASK.

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6. THE CIA: MRS. GANDHI'S ACCUSATIONS OF CIA SUPPORT FOR HER ENEMIES WERE BLUNTLY REPEATED TO BLOCK BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BOMBAY PRADESH CONGRESS COMMITTEE AND DOCK WORKERS LEADER MANOHAR KOTWAL. THE SENIOR STATE LABOR OFFICER IN POONA GAVE VENT TO THE SAME CHARGES. BOTH WERE TAKEN ABACK WITH BLOCK'S EQUALLY BLUNT REJOINDER THAT THERE WAS NOT A GRAIN OF TRUTH TO SUCH ALLEGATIONS.

BOTH MEN REPLIED THAT, NEVERTHELESS, MOST INDIANS BELIEVED THAT THE CIA WAS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN INDIA. IN THE US-SOVIET POPULARITY CONTEST IN INDIA, BOTH MAN WARNED THAT THE US WAS LOSING GROUND. PERSONS SUCH AS KOTWAL LECTURED BLOCK ABOUT THE HARM DONE TO US-INDIAN RELATIONS BY THE AFL-CIO'S ANTI-INDIRA RESOLUTION.

7. DURING A RECENT TRIP TO ANDHRA PRADESH AND ORISSA AS WELL AS ON THE TRIP TO MAHARASHTRA AND GOA, BLOCK DETECTED A GREAT AMOUNT OF SUSPICION ON THE PART OF SEVERAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS. ONE OFFICIAL TOLD HIM THAT BECAUSE OF THE EMERGENCY, HE COULD PROVIDE NO "INFORMATION." HOWEVER, MOST PERSONS WHOM BLOCK CONTACTED WERE FRIENDLY AND WELL-DISPOSED TO THE US.
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